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Students Perspective of Healthy Living in College

Andrea Coxey

Eastern Illinois University

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John K. Coleman

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Students Perspective of Healthy Living in College

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BY

Andrea Coxey

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Running head: HEALTHY LIVING IN COLLEGE

Students Perspective of Healthy Living in College

Andie Coxey

Eastern Illinois University

HEALTHY LIVING IN COLLEGE

Abstract

Using qualitative methodology, the researcher studied what participants definition of a healthy lifestyle as compared to how they actually live. Through conducting six one on one interviews with participants, it was found that physical health was the most widely recognized aspect of health, and that each participant had a unique definition of health. Mental health was not initially recognized by participants but was shown to be an important connection to all aspects of health including physical health, emotional health, sleep and nutrition. Participants recognized the importance of involvement and their transition to college as impacting their definition of health and their lifestyle in college. Recommendations for future research and Student Affairs professionals are discussed to continue educating students on all aspects of health and helping with the transition to college and living on their own.

Keywords: health, well-being, physical health, mental health, transition to college, involvement, role models

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to everyone that has instilled the importance of health in my life. From my soccer coaches, to my doctors and physical therapists who helped me recover from knee surgeries, and my parents who got me involved in sports from a young age. Health and wellness would not be as important in my life if it was not for your support and encouragement.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Physical activity in college students has been declining in recent years, when in fact it has been shown to be one of the best ways to handle all the stressors that college students face. The main reason for the decline is that it may be the first time many students are away from home and they are in a transitional period in which they are making independent decisions about eating behaviors and physical activity (Boyle & LaRose, 2008). Students are adjusting to a new environment in college and finding ways to handle the stresses that accompany this adjustment. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM/AHA) recommends that “all healthy adults need moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity for a minimum of 30 minutes on five days each week or vigorous-intensity aerobic activity for a minimum of 20 minutes on three days a week” (ACSM/AHA, para. 2). While those might be the recommendations for adult aged college students, colleges have started to see higher levels of inactivity in students due to stress and time constraints from the demands of college; reports have shown that college stressors have increased in severity, and include things such as unexpected breakups, managing difficult tasks beyond their capabilities, and making decisions about their futures (Chao, 2012).

Not only has physical activity decreased in college students but so has mental and emotional health, because of many of the same reasons as physical activity; like more difficult classes, adjusting to an independent lifestyle, and changes in social network (Doerksen, Elavsky, Rebar, & Conroy, 2014). The decline of mental and emotional health in many ways is related to physical health levels. Research clearly indicates a

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positive association between exercise and psychological health mostly because exercise promotes well-being which includes improvements in depressed mood, anxiety and stress, along with self-esteem (Taliaferro, Rienzo, Pigg, Miller, & Dodd, 2009). With the increase in well-being, students have less depressed thoughts and an overall healthier lifestyle, and even significantly less risks of students considering suicide (Taliaferro et al., 2009).

Previous research has looked at the many different factors that contribute to students decrease in physical activity in college years (VanKim & Nelson, 2013; Dinger, Brittain, & Hutchinson, 2014). Some of these factors include self-efficacy, leisure time, social support networks, motivations and the college environment (Welle & Graf, 2011). All of these factors also influence a student's mental health and ultimately how well they adapt to stressors in college. Being away from parental support and influence is another influential reason why we are seeing a decrease in physical activity in college aged students (Barton & Hirsch, 2016). Student support groups are changing from parents and family, and peer groups are a larger source of support (Harmon, Forthofer, Bantum, & Nigg, 2016). With peers playing a bigger role in student's motivation to maintain a healthy lifestyle, motivations start shifting onto the individual instead of on their family support system. Since college is such a learning and growing time for students, college presents the opportunity to establish healthy lifestyle habits.

There has been much research done on how college students should adopt healthy lifestyle behaviors and maintain those into adulthood (Levy & Cardinal, 2006; Boyle & LaRose, 2008). The research also shows where students are falling short on these expectations of physical activity as of recently, and how that affects their overall well-

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being, including mental and emotional health (Bhochhibhoya, Branscum, Taylor, & Hofford, 2014). This research hopes to look at how college student's definition of a healthy lifestyle actually compares to their own behaviors. In students' definition of a healthy lifestyle, this research also hopes to look at whether or not students consider mental and emotional health when they think of their own healthy lifestyle.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to see how college students define healthy living in college compared with how they actually live, at a mid-sized Midwest university, through qualitative interviews of students. This study shows how students view a healthy lifestyle, and hopefully gain an understanding on what areas students are lacking knowledge, in regards to a complete well-being and healthy lifestyle. When students typically consider a healthy lifestyle, the first thought is physical health, and not necessarily mental or emotional health. Results from this study can help inform institutions about where they can provide more learning opportunities to allow students to really grasp what it means to live a healthy lifestyle.

Research Questions

I hope to understand the similarities and differences between how students define healthy living and how they live their own healthy lifestyle. The survey answered the following research questions:

1. How does one define "healthy living"?
2. What are student's motivations for living a healthy lifestyle?
3. How do students define well-being and does that include mental and emotional health along with physical health?

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4. How do social support networks impact healthy living?
5. What are students doing to live up to or not live up to their definition of “healthy living” and overall well-being?

Assumptions

For the previous research questions, and from previous research, this study assumes that there will be similarities and differences between how students define a healthy lifestyle and the behaviors they use to achieve a healthy lifestyle. It is also assumed that when students define healthy living and overall well-being they do not initially consider mental and emotional health. Students are dependent on their social support networks to provide them with support to encourage a healthy lifestyle. Finally, students have different forms of motivation that push them to stay physically active that range from person to person.

Significance of the Study

College is a defining moment in people’s lives, and establishing healthy behaviors in college could affect healthy behaviors for the rest of someone’s life. Students are transitioning away from home and this change brings about shifts in life style behaviors along with support groups that are different than a student’s upbringing (Harmon, Forthofer, Bantum, & Nigg, 2016). Obtaining a better understanding of how students perceive a healthy lifestyle and how they actually live a healthy lifestyle could show what influences their definitions of healthy living. When students are learning and adapting to their new environment, it is also important for them to learn about their own mental and emotional health behaviors. This is considered emotional intelligence and consists of how a student understands and copes with their emotions (Bhochhibhoya et al., 2014).

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Understanding how a student's mental and emotional health affects them in college is just as important as physical health because of the stressors that college can put on a student. Finally, this study could show student's motivations to live a healthy life, along with who or what influences that. A student's social support group is changing in college and the support they once had to live a healthy lifestyle may no longer be there for them. Overall this study could have a significant impact on how students are educated about healthy lifestyle behaviors while they are in college because it is a time of significant growth and learning about oneself.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations of the study include that interviews will only be done on about six to eight people which means that only a few perspectives of students will be considered. Also because of the nature of gathering participants, relying on other individuals to identify potential participants could provide the study with participants who are already physically active, potentially skewing the study. Finally, it will be important in the study to have participants from different years in school, which could prove to be difficult in finding upperclassman willing to participate because of the increased likelihood of them living off campus.

Delimitations include not interviewing students who participate on the school's collegiate athletic teams. They will have a different sense of what a healthy lifestyle looks like and could potentially skew the overall data collected.

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Definitions of Terms

Emotional intelligence. The ability to identify various forms of emotion, incorporate emotion into the thinking process, and use this ability to manage personal growth (Bhochhibhoya et al., 2014).

Healthy lifestyle. A healthy lifestyle is getting eight plus hours of sleep a night, having a balanced diet, getting regular exercise and being involved in extra-curricular sports (Welle & Graf, 2011).

Leisure time. Also known as free time, is typically when people have the most control over their activity participation (Doerksen et al., 2014).

Physical activity. The frequency of vigorous or moderate exercise and strength or toning exercises (Taliaferro et al., 2009).

Self-efficacy. Refers to an individuals' situation-specific self-confidence (Pauline, 2013).

Social support. Consists of a number of different domains, including emotional support, appraisal and affirmation, informational assistance, intimacy, comfort, and physical affection (Hale, Hannum, & Espelage, 2005).

Stress tolerance. The variance in ability to handle stress and how some people can handle large amounts of stress while others are crippled with much less (Welle & Graf, 2011).

Well-being. "A global synthesis of physical and mental health and provides a more comprehensive outcome on which to base health promotion and disease prevention efforts" (Ridner, Newton, Staten, Crawford, & Hall, 2016, p. 116).

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Summary

In this study, the objective is to interview students to see what they perceive healthy living to be and what they actually do to live a healthy lifestyle. By pointing out the similarities and differences between student's definition and what they actually do, we can see who or what is influencing their lifestyles and decisions. Society has many influences on students and what they should be doing, which can change student's motivations to live a healthy lifestyle, such as the peer pressure to stay thin, for females, or to have muscle definition for men, instead of just to be healthy. Finally, this study will help to see if students consider all aspects of healthy living such as mental and emotional health, or if they just focus on physical health.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Previous research looks at various factors that play into a college student's physical and mental health and lifestyle. Some of those factors include the transition away from home, social support networks, motivations, stress and sleep habits (VanKim & Nelson, 2013). The following review of literature looks at the many different aspects of a college student's life, such as the transition to college, the change in social support networks, physical health, stress, and mental and emotional health. This study also aims to discover how these aspects affect a student's definition of a healthy lifestyle, along with why healthy habits decrease during a college students time away at school.

Transition to college

The first time a student has to move away from home, can be difficult. College may be the first time a student takes full responsibility for their own health and well-being because they are away from their parents or guardians (Ridner et al., 2016). Students are not only expected to take care of themselves, solely for the first time, but are also expected to adjust to the new environment. In this new environment, students are expected to handle a more difficult academic work load while also adjusting to their newfound freedom (Welle & Graf, 2011). These are just a few areas of stress in the transition to college that may cause students to move maintaining a healthy lifestyle down on their list of priorities.

The transition from adolescence to adulthood has been recognized as a critical stage for developing unhealthy physical activity behaviors (Van Dyck, Bourdeaudhuij, Deliens, & Deforche, 2014). Part of the transition is figuring out what the student's new

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schedule will look like with new classes and the new-found responsibility for themselves and balancing busy schedules with all the new college commitments (Van Dyck et al., 2014). Students are no longer able to look to their parents or other authority figures to tell them what they need to do, which will require them to have higher levels of independence. In high school students tend to participate in organized sports with true commitments and required presence at trainings where someone is pushing them to be physically active (Van Dyck et al., 2014). In college, while there are very organized sports through the university, more students tend to participate in more informal sporting opportunities. Students no longer prioritize sports, or physical activity, their priority is on things such as classwork and social activities. Consequently, since students choose to prioritize differently, physical activity and sports are no longer a priority, resulting in a decrease in leisure-time sports participation in college (Van Dyck et al., 2014).

Along with adjusting to a new environment, college is also seen as a time for growth, change and other valuable opportunities for students to be able to individuate themselves from their families (Bland, Melton, Welle & Bigham, 2012). In this newfound freedom, away from parental supervision, it is easy to see students make decisions for themselves because they no longer have anyone to make decisions for them. One of the decisions they will have to make is whether or not physical activity and healthy living is a part of their life in college. Students in college are at the highest risk for decreases in physical activity levels, because of the shift away from home and all the extra pressures students experience in college (Levy & Cardinal, 2006). While there are decreases in physical activity levels in college, it is also one of the most crucial times for students to adopt healthy behaviors. Since college is a time when we see the most change in students,

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we also tend to see “many adult behaviors are established during the college years” (Pauline, 2013, p. 65). College is the first time some students start to make decisions for themselves and their lifestyle, decisions that will help establish behaviors that could continue into adulthood.

The transition to college has only been seen to be harder for the Millennial generation because of a different parenting style. “The Millennial parent has been labeled the ‘Helicopter’ parent, ready to intervene and solve the Millennial trouble” (Bland, Melton, Bigham, & Welle 201, p. 364). An example of a helicopter parent is one who provides their children an overly structured childhood. Parents would put their child in everything from sports to camps to instruments, which meant that Millennials tended not to have to think about how to structure their leisure time (Bland et al., 2012). Also with a ‘Helicopter’ parent, they tend to make decisions and solve problems for this generation, which could mean many menial decisions in college, become even harder because they have never had to make them before. This type of parenting is one of the reasons the current generations now struggle with problem solving since they have always had someone there to solve issues for them (Bland et al., 2012). Consequently, college students may have a hard time working physical activity into their daily life. They have always had a parent or guardian to guide them through a healthy lifestyle instead of consciously making that decision on their own. This also goes back to how parents structured their lives from such a young age, and how the high school environment supported this structure. Being away from home and in college where time is less structured can become a problem for college students because there an expectation for self-regulation and internal motivation in students to fill their time (Barton & Hirsch,

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2016). Finally, the transition to college and the newfound freedom it brings is one of the reasons why we see a decrease of physical activity in college and how college students are not meeting the recommended levels of physical activity (Pauline, 2013).

Social Support Networks

Incoming college students also see a shift in their social support networks as they move away from home. It has been argued “the dynamic between parent, family and peer support and influence shifts, with peers becoming a greater source of support and influence as young adults transition away from home” (Harmon et al., 2016, p. 2).

Students are no longer able to rely on their family to be their main support because of the distance created by going to college, though some students may commute or chose to remain close to home. They now look to those around them for support and potentially even look to for healthy behaviors. Previous research shows that there is a positive association between social support and physical health, since social support is a central component of relationships which ultimately influences health and well-being (Hale, Hannum, & Espelage, 2005). The social support that college students are now seeking is now of peer groups instead of their family.

In terms of social support groups in college, there are a few domains that students may be seeking. These domains include tangible support, belonging, disclosure and social intimacy which were studied by Hale, Hannum, and Espelage (2005). Specifically, this study looked at how these various domains are then associated with physical and mental health. The study consisted of 247 undergraduates who participated, 134 of which were women and 113 were men, at a large Midwestern university. Participants completed packets which contained questions about demographics, a measure of support

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questionnaire, such as tangible support, belonging and social intimacy, and a physical health questionnaire. Results of the study showed that belonging seemed to be the only variable that directly predicted health. Belonging included the availability of a social network and while it did affect both males and females it seemed to have a greater impact on female's health perceptions. This idea of needing to belong in females is consistent with the concept of attachment which can be seen more in women because the presence of others has a calming effect (Hale et al., 2005). The results of belonging are also related to the sense of belonging in college students because "this is a time when forming social connections becomes critical and attachment style could influence young adults who are forming new relationships" (Hale et al., 2005, p. 281). The authors of the study also found that disclosure, social intimacy, and tangible support gave any prediction of health in students. It was thought that none of the other domains were significant because there was already a high level of physical activity in the participants. Belonging was the only significance in the study, and it is important to note that sense of belonging is a significant reason why college students may participate in healthy behaviors.

Social support networks have also been seen to be a way for students to cope with the mental stress in college. Previous research states that "the factor most strongly associated with high stress tolerance is a strong social network, which many college students lose upon their initial transition to college" (Welle & Graf, 2011, p. 97). Again, this touches on how student's relationships change from their family support to now peer support and how the transition takes a toll on mental health of students. One study by Zaleski, Levey-Thors and Schiaffino (1998) concluded that high family support at the beginning of a student's college experience could be a hindrance. It affects the way a

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student perceives their own role in college and makes it hard for them to reach emotional independence. The results of the study only reinforced the idea that students need to have the transition time to have personal growth and the chance to define themselves as an individual. Support networks, while being a coping mechanism, also acts as a buffer for students when stress levels become intense. While it can be seen as a buffer, it truly depends on type and source of support, and ultimately how the student perceives the effectiveness of support (Zaleski, Levey-Thors & Schiaffino, 1998). The importance of support for students can be seen in the previously mentioned study, which discussed the different domains of social support and how some were more effective than others in promoting positive physical and mental health (Hale et al., 2005). Even though there are specific types of social support that help students maintain physical and mental health through the transition to college, it depends on the person as to which type of support makes the most difference.

Motivations for Physical Activity

There are many different reasons why someone would choose to participate in physical activity and healthy lifestyle behaviors. Motivations could include anything from physical appearance, fitting in socially, pressures from others, and even just to maintain healthy behaviors. While one would hope that the reason someone participates in a physical activity would be to do just that, to remain physically active, the reality of college students show that there are other reasons besides health-related that they choose to participate in physical activity (Buscemi, Martens, Murphy, Yurasek, & Smith, 2011).

One of these motivations, especially for women, is the idea of body image and maintaining a certain sense of positive physical appearance (Taliaferro, Rienzo, Pigg,

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Miller, & Dodd, 2009). For students, the idea of obtaining a certain body type, provides a certain sense of self-esteem and confidence. Body image can be seen as “an important determinant of physical and global self-esteem, especially among women” (Taliaferro et al., 2009, p. 429). In society, and especially social media, women may feel the pressure to maintain a certain body type in order to feel accepted by others and themselves. On the other hand, with men, there is beginning to be a more cultural trend toward a muscular ideal for men which suggests that body image is becoming a more notable issue for men as well (Gillen & Lefkowitz, 2006). In a study done by Gillen and Lefkowitz (2006), researchers examined gender role development and body image among first-year college students. The researchers surveyed 434 first-year college students, 52% women and 48% male, and gave them various surveys including the contour drawing rating scale, multidimensional body-self relations questionnaire, and the male and female role norms scale, respectfully. Results of the study showed, specifically in terms of sex and body image, that men would have a more positive body image than women and that women evaluated their appearance less favorably than men. “Considering that men’s BMI was significantly higher than women’s, it is likely that greater sociocultural pressure on women regarding appearance explains these differences” (Gillen & Lefkowitz, 2006, p. 32).

In a study done by Ullrich-French, Cox, and Bumpus (2013) physical activity motivation regulations were defined and examined in terms of how they affected a college student’s healthy lifestyle. That is how a student regulates themselves to stay active and what personally drove them to stay motivated. These types of motivations ranged from being completely self-regulated or self-determined to being completely

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controlling. The types of regulation show that the reasons why one would be motivated to stay physically active and they range from person-to-person. Results from the study showed a “small decrease in identified regulation, and a small increase in introjected regulation and amotivation’ (Ullrich-French, Cox, & Bumpus, 2013, p. 96). This means that there was a small decrease in self-determination reasons for motivation, and an increase in “avoidance of guilt” and the “absence of intentionality” (Ullrich-French et al., 2013, p. 97). The study also showed an overall pattern of decline in value and importance of physical activity in college but also an increase in feelings of guilt of not being physically active. Even though college students do not necessarily meet the recommended weekly values of physical activity identified as 30 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity, five times a week, which is considered to be healthy, they do have the feeling of guilt from not being physically active.

Physical Health

When someone thinks of living a healthy lifestyle, the first thought that may come to mind is physical health and well-being. Physical activity is considered the “frequency of vigorous or moderate exercise and strength or toning exercises” (Taliaferro et al., 2009, p. 427). There are several different types of physical activity college students can participate in and everyone can have a different form of physical activity that they enjoy doing. Different forms that people could participate in include running, weight lifting, participating in sports, yoga, and more. While there are so many different forms that physical activity can take, it is recommended for a healthy adult to participate in physical activity either moderate activity 30 minutes, five days a week or vigorous activity 20 minutes, three days a week (ACSM/AHA, para. 2, 2007).

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Physical activity has been on the decline recently in college students, even though physical activity has been linked to so many health benefits for individuals. Some of these benefits include lessened risk for chronic disease, decrease in obesity, and a decrease in mental health problems such as anxiety and depression (Eysenbach, 2015). As college students learn how to cope with the stressors of college and learning to live independently, they are learning to take control of their own physical health. They are learning their own personal reasons and motivations to continue to be physically active after leaving high school. “The decrease in physical activity is mainly attributed to their newly independent adult life away from their parents, coupled with their demanding work-study schedule” (Bhochhibhoya et al., 2014, p. 191). Maintaining or learning new physical activity behaviors is crucial for students since there are so many stressors that college puts on a student.

Finally, another part of a healthy lifestyle that gets neglected, and the daily recommended hours are neglected, is sleep. “Poor sleep among college students was associated with lower academic performance in college students” (Ridner et al., 2016, p. 117). Sleep can sometimes be the first part of personal health that is easily decreased. It is so easy for a student to stay up late or get up early, diminishing sleep time, to meet their academic and social demands on their schedule. It is recommended that students receive about six to eight hours of sleep a night, but with the schedule of a college student, sometimes getting the recommended amounts of sleep is difficult. Especially in first-year college students, they may not know how to balance their schedule, without parents enforcing curfews, they have the power to decide when they want to go to sleep and when they wake up in the morning (Orzech, Salafsky & Hamilton, 2011). The purpose of

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sleep is to allow the body to rejuvenate itself and overall just give the body the time to relax (Ridner et al., 2016). With so much time spent on demanding academics and other responsibilities, which can contribute to the decrease in sleep in college students, there is not time for the body to rest and be ready for the next day. “Poor sleep quality has negative effects on physical health and may also make students feel more tense, irritable, anxious, depressed, angry and confused” (Orzech et al., 2011, p. 613). Not receiving a consistent amount of sleep each night could result in more overall sleep problems and lower well-being in individuals (Ridner et al., 2016). It is important to not only remember physical activity as a time for the body to lower physical problems, but also sleep is a part of a healthy lifestyle because it allows the body to restart fresh each day.

Stress

In almost all research articles, discussing physical activity in college students brings up stress in one way or another. “Specific stressor or challenges include, but are not limited to, interpersonal relationships, living arrangement, personal finances, more frequent experiences of failure, and important career decisions” (Bland et al., 2014, p. 560). College can be seen as one of the most stressful time in a person’s life because of the freedom and the pressure of a career decision. While stress is unavoidable in a student’s college career, because of the nature and pressure of the academic environment, it is all about how a student copes with the stress. This is where physical activity and a healthy lifestyle come into play because “physical activity has been well-documented as an effective means of reducing stress and anxiety” (Bland et al., 2014, p. 560).

A recent study by Welle and Graf (2011) looked at effectiveness of lifestyle habits and coping strategies on stress tolerance among college students. This study

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acknowledged that stress can have many negative effects on students over time. Stress tolerance was also taken into consideration in the study, which is the idea that certain people can handle more stress than others (Welle & Graf, 2011). The study had looked at many different ways students could choose to handle the stressors of college, one of those being activities related to physical health. Results showed that, especially in females, enough exercise, balanced diet, and extra-curricular sport were significant in higher stress tolerance. While these results were not as significant in males, there was still enough data to show that adopting healthy physical activity behaviors could be beneficial to college students.

In another study, the authors aimed to see if the impact of physical activity associated behaviors and exercise types were significantly associated with high stress tolerance in college students (Bland et al., 2014). Results of this study also showed that the physical activity associated behaviors that the study looked at were statistically significant in producing higher tolerance of stress. This study also showed that physical activity can help a college student better cope with the amounts of stress that the transition to college may bring to students. Ultimately the hypothesis of the study was supported in that “students with high stress tolerance were more likely to engage in physical activity associated behavior” (Bland et al., 2014, p. 563).

Overall, stress on a college campus is unavoidable, it is all about how a student learns to cope with that stress in effective ways. One of those ways, which was replicated many times previously, is through learning healthy lifestyle behaviors including various forms of physical activity. As more and more students attend college, more pressure is experienced. College becomes something that is expected of students instead of

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something that is reserved for students in higher socioeconomic classes (Bland et al., 2012). In this time of transition, it is important for students to develop healthy strategies to be able to appropriately handle stress.

Emotional and Mental health

A part of overall health that is sometimes not considered is mental and emotional health. It is well documented that physical activity plays a role in increasing overall health, but physical activity also plays a significant role in determinants of mental health (Bhochhibhoya et al., 2014). Mental health helps a student handle the stress of college life better and physical activity can help decrease stress. Physical activity gives many benefits when it comes to long term help but it has also been linked to many ways that it decreases negative mental health behaviors.

In a study done by Taliaferro et al. (2009) the goal was to look at the connection between types of physical activity and mental health concerns, including hopelessness, depression and suicidal behavior, among college students. The study looked at different types of physical activity which included vigorous or moderate exercise, and also strength and toning exercises. Previous research shows the positive impact physical activity can have on psychological health such as positive well-being and improvements in depressed mood, anxiety and stress (Doerksen, Elavsky, Rebar & Conroy, 2014). Results of this study supported previous research in that certain levels of physical activity can indeed lower levels of negative psychological health. Physical activity not only lowers negative psychological health, it has always been taught to be a good way for students to maintain previous health habits, and can also help to lower stress and overall anxiety that life brings. The study concluded that overall, there were significantly lower

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rates of hopelessness, depression and suicidal behavior in students who participated in physical activity behaviors than those that did not (Taliaferro et al., 2009). This is important in future research because students may not always consider other benefits of physical activity which includes maintaining their mental and emotional health.

Emotional health is also another part of health that many students do not consider. Also known as emotional intelligence, it is defined as “the ability to identify various forms of emotion, incorporate emotion into the thinking process, and use this ability to manage personal growth” (Bhochhibhoya et al., 2014, p. 192). As it has been previously mentioned, college is a time when a student is truly trying to define themselves and figure out who they want to be. Part of this is being able to manage their emotions in an adult like manner and being able to communicate those emotions to others in an appropriate way. Having awareness of emotional health can be a protective factor from things such as depression, anxiety and other psychological issues that college students these days tend to encounter (Bhochhibhoya et al., 2014).

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

As physical activity and a healthy lifestyle are considered in college students, it is important to include theory that could help us to better understand how students develop these lifestyle habits. One of these theories includes the Transtheoretical Model of behavior change. This model has been “applied to physical activity to explain behavior change over time and provides a framework for physical activity intervention research” (Levy & Cardinal, 2006, p. 477). It has been applied to physical activity in college students because it suggests that change in physical activity participation changes over time, in stages. These stages include changes in the cognitive and behavior processes and

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how individuals engage in changes in their health behaviors (Levy & Cardinal, 2006).

There are five stages in this model that can help explain students changes in terms of physical activity and will ultimately help in future research of college student's healthy lifestyle patterns and changes. The five stages are precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance (Levy & Cardinal, 2006). With these stages, relapse back into previous stages is not uncommon, which has then brought about a sixth stage which is transformation or termination. In this final stage, individuals either choose to adopt regular physical activity for, potentially a lifetime and are no longer at risk for becoming sedentary or irregularly active (Levy & Cardinal, 2006). This model will provide insight in future research because it will help explain the stages a student could potentially go through to reach the goal of becoming and staying physically active long-term.

Another theory that could be used to explain students and a healthy lifestyle is Self-Determination Theory. This theory is a way to define different reasons for individuals to engage in a behavior, which in this case is physical activity (Ullrich-French et al., 2013). This theory focuses on motivation for engaging in the behavior. There are many different motivations that are considered in this theory from intrinsic motivation and external regulation (Ullrich-French et al., 2013). Self-determination theory will also be helpful in this research study for finding the reasons why students choose to participate in physical activity as they move into their college career. This theory could also help in determining new ways to engage college students to get them more invested in physical activity and a healthy lifestyle.

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Summary

Previous research has looked at the many different factors that could play into a student's definition of a healthy lifestyle and well-being. Things such as a change in social network, scheduling and leisure time and a change in motivation for being physically active, are all factors that play a role in how students define their own healthy lifestyle. The transition to college for students is one of the most important times in their lives because it is the time that they start to define who they are as an individual, away from their families. Also, as seen in the previous research, the social networks students involve themselves in along with their personal motivations help to determine what physical and mental health look like for them. Finally, it is easy to see the many benefits that overall health and well-being can have on a college student which again reaffirms the importance of learning their own individual definitions. All of these factors play into college students idea of physical activity and how they live a healthy lifestyle or not. This study hopes to expand on the research of how students spend their time, what they perceive a healthy lifestyle to be and what barrier or motivations they have for living a healthy lifestyle.

CHAPTER III

Methods

This study used a qualitative design approach because it is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals have of a particular experience (Creswell, 2014). A qualitative approach was chosen as the best approach for this study because data collected in a qualitative study allows participants to share their perceptions in order to make meaning of the data collected (Creswell, 2014). In this study, participants were interviewed to understand a student's perception of a healthy lifestyle. The use of an interview will help to allow for free conversation between participant and interviewer, and will allow the interviewer to ask follow up questions as needed.

Design of the Study

Qualitative interviews were used where students were asked questions about their perceptions of healthy living. Through the use of interviews, individual meaning was seen in each participant and their idea of healthy living, which is the focus of qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). Six interviews were conducted with participants from a mid-sized Midwestern four-year public university. Questions that were asked (found in Appendix A) were aimed at understanding a student's perception on how to live a healthy lifestyle and also about how they may live up to that definition.

Participants

Participants were undergraduate students at a mid-sized Midwestern four-year state university. Six participants were interviewed by voluntary participation, and were chosen based off of recommendations from other campus student affairs professionals. In choosing participants, the researcher chose students from different backgrounds and

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involvement on campus. Participants also vary in year in school, from sophomore to senior in undergrad, to provide varying definitions of a healthy lifestyle.

Research Site

A mid-sized Midwestern four-year state university, with enrollment of 7,415, in a rural community with a population of 21,961. This institution has 18 various NCAA division I sports teams for both men and women, along with many indifferent intramural sports teams and a campus recreation center which serves around 2,000 students daily (institutional website).

Instruments

A semi-structured interview was used with participants. There were some questions that were asked of all participants, and then appropriate follow up questions were given as needed. The questions, which can be found in Appendix A, were selected because of the nature of gathering a student's definition of a healthy lifestyle and then being able to explore a student's thinking of that definition. Interviews were arranged by asking student affairs professionals from across the university to provide names of students who would be willing to participate in an interview and seen as a leader to their peers. This sampling method is known as purposefully selecting participants, which allows the researcher to "select participants that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question" (Creswell, 2014, p. 239). The interviews were held in a comfortable location for both the participant and the researcher.

Data Collection Procedures

Data from the interviews was collected on two separate recording devices. The use of two recording devices was used in the case that one device fails, the researcher had

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a backup of the data. Participants were asked to sign a waiver of informed consent before interviews proceeded and were informed that participation is voluntary. Students names were not connected to the data and students remain anonymous. All information from the study will be kept on one flash drive to maintain confidentiality of the participants. Data will be kept for three years after research has concluded, after which all information on the flash drive will be destroyed, in accordance with the institution's IRB policy.

Data Analysis

Responses from the interviews were transcribed into Microsoft Word in order to be looked at for content analysis. Codes were made from the data to be able to draw conclusions and similarities from the data across multiple interviews. These codes were short words or phrases that can be used to connect information from the different interviews (Saldaña, 2013). The researcher used these codes to find similarities or patterns in definition and idea of a healthy lifestyle across the various participants. By coding the interviews and finding the patterns, the researcher was then able to develop themes in my research to answer my original research questions.

Summary

Qualitative research methods, specifically interviews, were chosen for this study since free conversation allowed participants to better articulate their definition of a healthy lifestyle. Participants were purposefully selected based off recommendations from other student affair professionals from a mid-sized, Midwestern, four-year public institution. There were also variation in participants based off their year in school, background, and involvement on campus. Once interviews with participants were

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conducted, the interviews were then coded in order to find patterns between the participants and ultimately find student's definitions of a healthy lifestyle.

Chapter IV

Results

The purpose of this study was to see how college students define healthy living in college compared with how they actually behave. This chapter reports on the themes that emerged through the qualitative analysis of six semi-structured interviews. Several themes are identified and they are organized by research question.

Research Question #1: How does one define “healthy living”?

Each participant was asked to provide their personal definition for healthy living and a healthy lifestyle at the beginning of their interview. Each participant gave a very unique definition, but several common themes emerged which included: physical health, sleep, nutrition and diet, and participants having an individual definition and focus.

Physical Health

When participants were asked to describe a healthy lifestyle, four of the six participants mentioned either physical health, or making sure they got enough exercise. Physical health was the part of overall health that was mentioned the most during the interviews. While all of the participants mentioned multiple elements of healthy living, physical health and exercise was the common thread among them. Specifically, Participant 3 said, “I go to the gym, like once or twice a week, but exercise, I think you should do every day, at least walking, or biking, some type of cardio every day.”

Participant 4 also stated, “physical health is not just eating right or working out or stuff like that, but being comfortable with your body, knowing that you don’t have to look [a certain way] to be considered beautiful.” He went on to talk more about how he

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believes that people should work out for more than just to look good, but also to feel good about themselves.

Sleep

Another aspect of health that was mentioned multiple times was getting enough sleep. Of the six participants, two mentioned the importance of sleep, and making sure they get the amount that they need to be successful. Sleep, was an important part of a healthy lifestyle for Participant 6, “I think a healthy lifestyle includes a couple things: exercising, a good diet, and sleep, those are the main three.” For Participant 2, sleep is by far the aspect of health that they care about the most. This was especially clear when she said, “sleep is most important to me. I take two naps a day, normally, which is probably too much sleep a day, and I also sleep right through the night, so I wake up the same time every day, even on the weekends.” While the idea of getting enough sleep was only mentioned by two participants, both commented on how college students do not usually think that sleep is a part of a healthy lifestyle. Participant 6 mentioned how her schedule, along with other college students’ schedules, are busy and that sleep is almost forgotten because there are so many other things going on.

Nutrition and Diet

Eating and maintaining a good diet was mentioned by three of the participants. Participant 6 mentioned that there were three main aspects of a healthy lifestyle, one of which was a good diet. She said, “I know I need to eat healthier, but it’s not like something that comes to me naturally.” In talking about overall health, Participant 5 discussed his philosophy of taking care of yourself, “more so just maintaining yourself,

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like getting square meals each day”, and in this philosophy, he also noted the importance of nutrition and diet.

Eating right was mentioned in a series of other aspects of healthy living, although none of the participants elaborated on what maintaining a good diet meant for them. Participants did not elaborate or define what a proper diet was, other than knowing they should make healthier choices in their diet, such as not eating out as much or eating junk food.

Individual Definition and Focus

After being asked what their personal definition of a healthy lifestyle was, participants were also asked what aspects of that definition were the most important. None of the participants had the same definition, they each had one particular aspect of healthy living that they focused on more than the other aspects. In their interviews, this focus, was something that they continually brought up in the conversation, such as it being the most important aspect to them, and they mentioned how they make that aspect a priority in their lifestyle.

Participant 1 focused on involvement being most important to him, and using involvement to keep him busy and well rounded. He was the only participant to mention involvement as his way of keeping himself healthy. Participant 2 focused on sleeping being most important to them when she said, “sleeping right, which most college students do not do” was something for which she always made time. Participant 5 also focused on getting adequate amount of sleep, along with overall just maintaining yourself through diet.

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The focus of Participant 4 was on knowing and loving yourself, by using spiritual and mental health to give him a purpose. He said, “I would say just knowing, loving yourself first. Loving yourself is the biggest thing and that all goes into like mental health and how you perceive yourself around others.”

Participant 6 focused on physical health and exercise when they stated:

I would say that exercise is most important. Even though I feel like that is the hardest part because not everyone has time, which I am going through right now, because you do not always have time to exercise but you just have to find the little things like taking the stairs.

Participant 3 also highlighted physical health as more important when she said, “a healthy lifestyle for a college student would be making sure that your mental health, and your physical health [are good], and also having time for yourself, but also for your academics.”

Overall, while no two participants gave the same definition, they did have overlapping themes, even when they put emphasis on different aspects of their definitions.

Research Question #2: What are student’s motivations for living a healthy lifestyle?

After asking participants about their involvements and daily schedules in college, themes about their motivation for a healthy lifestyle emerged. The themes that emerged around the students’ motivation for living a healthy lifestyle are: body image, classes and campus involvement, and time management in college compared to high school.

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Body Image

Two of the participants, when talking about their motivation to live a healthy lifestyle, stated that the way they look is the reason why they are motivated to be healthy or think about their health. Participant 5 talked about his decision to join ROTC as one of his ways to keep himself in shape:

I feel without ROTC, I would be big, I would be huge. That is the reason I joined ROTC actually. I came here at 180 and it instantly rose to 220. I was so uncomfortable with myself, my thighs touching. I did not like it, I was so uncomfortable, so I ended up joining ROTC because I was like, I would rather join something like a class, knowing I that I have perfect attendance and stuff. I would rather join a class that I am required to go to as a grade, knowing that I would get those pounds off me, instead of going to the REC and saying this is my New Year's resolution, and then stopping. So I feel like it was a great decision.

Participant 2 also talked about body image and how not being as active in college as she was in high school influenced her decision to take notice of her own healthy lifestyle habits. Participant 2 said:

Well when I was younger I did pageants, and I cheered and I danced, so I had to be in some type of shape. I stopped doing pageants in high school and I stopped dancing in high school, and I only cheered during high school. So once I got to college my mom was like if you want to gain weight like the rest of the family did, go ahead and do what you want to do.

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Classes and Campus Involvement

For Participant 6, being a Kinesiology major, was a significant motivation for her to stay healthy and live a healthy lifestyle. When asked if she thought her major influenced or has motivated her, Participant 6 said:

I think yes because when I was in my KSS classes, I am only in my internship right now so I am not in any KSS classes, but we constantly learned the definition of exercise and different ways to reach those goals and I think when I was taking those classes I heard it every single day.

Participant 1 also discussed that one of the first things they did when they came to campus was get involved, specifically with the Civic Engagement and Volunteerism office. Since Participant 1's definition of healthy lifestyle revolved around involvement, it makes sense that he uses volunteering to drive his behaviors. Participant 1 said, "Volunteering is also extremely important I think not only for a healthy lifestyle but it is important to a healthy community. So working in Civic Engagement and being able to give back, and you are helping people out, I do not know it just feels good." He used the feeling he got after helping people drive his motivation, especially how it made him feel good about himself.

Time Management in College Compared to High School

Participants were asked how their involvements have changed from high school, and whether those changes may have affected their motivations to maintain a healthy lifestyle in college. The common element that changed since coming to college, mentioned by multiple participants, was how there was more structure in their lives during high school. Most notable were meals being set for you instead of being

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responsible for the time and selection of food for themselves. Being involved in sports, which made participants have a set schedule, also included having someone there to force them to stay in good physical condition. Participant 2 even talked about how there were specific classes that students took in high school, to teach them about health, “I guess in high school, a class was given that would require you to think about what you eat, and things like that. In college, besides dietetics students, we don’t really have to take a PE class or nothing.” These participants all mentioned things outside of their own control that assisted them in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Three participants also talked about the differences in their involvement in outside activities changed after leaving high school and how that has impacted living a healthy lifestyle. Participant 1 discussed how he has definitely become more involved in college than high school which has impacted his lifestyle in college. He said, “in high school I really did not do much. I did cross country and track and [in college] it is definitely more important, I think, to go out and try different things, and also be a part of more and experience more.”

Both Participant 2 and Participant 6 mentioned how their involvement forced them to be active because other people were keeping them on track where as in college they have to keep themselves on track. Participant 6 said, “well in high school I was in basketball so that kept me really active, but after, when I was not in season I was not very active.” She also mentioned that because basketball was a part of her schedule, being on the team and her coach were forcing her to stay in shape, whereas now, she has to make time to be active.

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Participant 2 also mentioned how it was easier to be healthy in high school because, “my household was very set, like everything happens on a scheduled time. When I was in high school everything was set, so I would have breakfast at 6, then go to school and have lunch and go to classes and dinner was at 8 every night.” She compared this to now in college where she said, “nobody is forcing you to eat, nobody at the dining hall is saying you have to eat this salad and then you can have pizza, you could go back for as much pizza as you want.” Along with having a set schedule and someone there to help maintain your diet she also mentioned, “I feel like I was healthier in high school because I had to be, but in college I feel like people who are healthy in college, it is because they want to be.” Participant 2 realized that she was now in control of her own schedule instead of having someone else set it for her.

Research Question #3: How do students define well-being and does that include mental and emotional health along with physical health?

Participants were asked about whether or not they thought that mental and emotional health were a part of overall health and well-being. Only a few participants initially mentioned mental health in their personal definition, but after being asked about mental and emotional health, all six participants agreed it was a part of healthy living and a healthy lifestyle. The three themes that emerged for this research question are: all health being connected, alone time versus friendships, and overall happiness.

All Health is Connected

Of the six participants, four of them talked about how emotional, mental and physical health are all connected. These four participants talked about how the mental

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and emotional part of health affect the physical part, and then your overall daily life.

Participant 5 stated:

They are the same as the physical part of it because if you have the emotional that is affecting your brain, and it's affecting how it sleeps, how you work, and your work ethic, and something that would take you an hour to do is now taking you an hour and a half, because your mind just isn't there.

Similarly, Participant 2 talked about how they effect each other when she said, "If my physical health is not right then my emotional health would be altered because I feel anxiety about my body shape, and then my health would be altered and then I cannot focus in class."

Participant 6 and Participant 3 also talked about how all health is connected. They both talked about how if someone is not feeling the best about themselves, it then affects their sleep patterns and overall, their performance in class. Participant 6 said:

I would say emotional health probably has a really big pull because if you are upset about something, you do not want to get up and exercise, you do not want to eat healthy, you do not want to do anything. Also mental health because if you just have a mental block, then that can stop you from getting up and exercising or eating well or getting enough sleep.

Alone Time and Friendships

Another theme that came from research question two was the importance of both alone time and also friendships and their impact on mental and emotional health.

Participant 1 talked about their involvements, along with the people they interacted with in those involvements. They also talked about the importance of being around friends

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who like to do similar things, and how it can have a positive impact on emotional health. Participant 2 shared similar ideas when they mentioned the importance of having friends as a source of stress relief.

Participant 3, on the other hand, talked about the importance of having alone time and having time to yourself. This theme was seen when Participant 3 said, “As me, a college student, I am also really involved on campus, I have two jobs on campus, and sometimes I do not feel like I have time for myself, or any time to just take a moment and relax.”

Overall Happiness

Finally, overall happiness was something that four participants said impacts their healthy lifestyle, and specifically their mental and emotional health. Participant 1, who’s definition of a healthy lifestyle focused on involvement and giving back said, “I think being happy is definitely extremely important, just giving back makes you feel good, makes you feel happy, and being around your friends which is awesome.” Participant 2 also said being around her friends made her feel happy and allowed her to talk to them about things that might be affecting her happiness.

Participant 4 talked about how his emotions can fluctuate from day to day which affects his health. He talked about how one day he could be the happiest person ever and doing great, and then the next day not want to talk to anyone. Having these different emotions have impacted him and his productivity and his want to be around other people. Finally, Participant 6 talked about being upset about things and how that can cause you to have a mental block and can prevent you from doing a lot of things such as exercising

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and eating right. She also talked about how happiness can make you want to do the right things for your body and live that healthy lifestyle.

Research Question #4: How do social support networks impact healthy living?

Participants were asked to describe how their social support networks impact maintaining a healthy lifestyle. They were asked about who may influence their definition or execution of it, what activities they are involved in currently at college, and how the people in those involvements may have impacted their lifestyle. After talking with the participants about these questions, a few themes emerged which were: finding role models, group identity, and family life.

Role Models

All six participants, when asked who may influence their definition of a healthy lifestyle, were able to name a specific person that they looked up to, in terms of seeming to have it all together when it comes to living a healthy lifestyle. When Participant 3 talked about the person she looked up to, “She [role model] was involved, but she would always have time to work out, and she would always eat so healthy, and I am just like man I want that for myself. So she is the one person that I always kind of look up to for mental health, and just overall health.”

Participant 4 also talked about how his role model exemplified everything that he thinks of when he thinks of someone that lives a healthy lifestyle. When talking about his role model he said, “He is just one of those people where you just feel like they just got it all together. He knows what he is doing, and his mental health seems like it’s in a stable spot, he stays on top of work, I have never seen him stress about anything, or get angry

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about anything.” Participant 4 also mentioned that he wishes he could get to the same place that his role model was at because it seems as though he has it all together.

Participant 6 also discussed how a specific role model encouraged her to be more physically active. Participant 6 said:

She has kind of challenged me to do better, so I got a big water bottle to drink more water, so I have been doing that. Then for a while I was training for a 5K, so I was kind of like, well if she can get up at 4am and work a 10-hour day, well then there is no reason that I cannot do it.

She mentioned how this person she looks up to, is really someone who she aims to be in her future.

Participant 5 talked about how it was his Resident Assistant (RA) that pushed him to be active. He talked about how his freshman year RA always tried to get people on their floor to get involved with intramurals, and other physical things, which really encouraged him to be active. Similarly, Participant 1 talked about how the president in his fraternity is someone that encourages him to do better, because he always seems as though he has it together. Participant 2 discussed that one of her friends is a scholarship athlete who is on a tight schedule, and he is someone who serves as a source of inspiration for her.

Being Part of a Group

Being involved in some sort of group on campus was also a prominent theme when it came to having a healthy social support networks for the participants. Three of the participants named the groups that they were involved in and talked about the importance of being in the group. Participant 4 talked about the praise team and choir that

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he is involved in and how they have impacted his mental health. He talked about how it gave him an outlet and a group of people that made him feel at home. Participant 4 said, “It gave me a sense of belonging while I was here, it definitely helped out a lot. Not even just with like doing something that I like, but doing something with people who like the same thing, and we hang out and stuff.”

Participant 5 mentioned the feeling of support he gets from his involvements, and specifically from one of the honor societies of which he is a member. He stated, “We go to a study table, where we work together and just hang out, and give me that support.” He also stated that just taking a break from doing work, and being with his group of friends helps him to blow off steam and reconnect, helps him to become refocused on everything.

Finally, Participant 2 also talked about the group of friends that she has met from her social groups in college. This group of friends allows her to disconnect from campus, much like Participant 5. Participant 2 stated, “I hang with my friends a lot, we will all get together and do homework together, or we will all get together and just get away from campus a little bit and spend time together, which actually helps a lot.”

Family Life

The impact that families have on the participants and their social support, was seen in two of the six participants. Both of these participants talked about how their families impacted them in high school, but the support has changed since coming to college. Participant 1 stated that his family always encouraged him to stay involved and fit, but since coming to college, it is one of his peers who has become his biggest role model.

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Participant 2 talked about being at home while in high school and how her mom impacted her healthy lifestyle.

My mom cooked everyday so I never had to worry about, you know, if I am eating fried chicken and nothing else, she would give me like one piece of fried chicken with a bunch of rice and a bunch of vegetables, but now she is not here to cook for me, so I just eat whatever I can find.

She then went on to explain how now, living on a budget in college, has really made her conscious of what she is eating, and how she is not necessarily able to make a full meal like her mom used to make.

Research Question #5: What are students doing to live up to or not live up to their definition of “healthy living” and overall well-being?

Finally, when participants were asked about their overall definition of healthy living and whether or not they thought they lived up to that definition, each participant gave an answer with different explanations or qualifiers. Participants 2 and 4 both indicated that they did not live up to their own standards on a consistent basis, but did make an attempt. Both went on to explain why they thought that way; for Participant 2 it was because she realized she did not get the nutrition she thought she should. For Participant 4, he said “I just have not been proud of myself lately when it comes to a lot of things. I feel like I have not been motivated as I usually [am] about things.”

The four other participants did not give a direct answer, however they instead gave an answer with a qualifier, such as acknowledging their failings while also acknowledging their successes. Participant 5 said he did not feel as though he lived up to the definition all the time, he said, “not all the time, because there are just days when that

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comes second compared to all the responsibilities there are.” This is similar to Participant 3 who said, “I would say, I do at times, because depending on a lot of things, especially now midterms are coming up, [and] I do not have that much time to work out.”

Participant 1 and Participant 6 also had very similar answers because they both talked about actively thinking about living a healthy lifestyle and trying to base their lives off of their definition. When asked if he felt he lived up to his definition, Participant 1 said, “I would like to think so because I kind of try and base my life on a healthy life, so being able to live up to my standard of a healthy lifestyle, or if I were not able to live up to it, then I do not know, I feel like I would not enjoy life.” After being asked the question, Participant 6 said:

I think not always. I think sometimes I do because whenever I am actively thinking that, like, I should be doing this or like I need to get up and do this, or exercise, or I should not be eating this food, then I am more likely not to do it. So if I am actively thinking about it then yes, but otherwise, then no I do not think that I do.

While some participants were able to give a certain answer about their definition, these participants did not give a direct answer, instead they all gave reasons as to why they thought they did or did not meet their own standards. Knowing that they all had different explanations or qualifiers in their answers, two themes emerged for this research question; barriers to healthy living, and strategies for a healthy lifestyle.

Barriers to a Healthy Lifestyle

One of the biggest barriers for all of the participants was the impact of their schedules as college students. All of the participants discussed being involved in multiple

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things on campus, and mentioned that their schedule impacted whether or not they lived up to their personal expectation for healthy living. Both Participant 1 and Participant 2 talked about how they did not live up to their definition when it came to exercise. Neither of them found themselves going to the gym or being physically active as much as they felt that they should be.

Participant 3, 5 and 6 all talked about how it depended on the week, and their schedule that week, whether or not they felt they lived up to their definition. Specifically, Participant 5 talked about how all his other responsibilities sometimes take precedence over maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Participant 3 stated, “it depends on which week it is, so at times I feel that I kind of get close to what I perceive as overall health, but at times it’s like, super-duper not even, just like an outlier for the day.”

Participant 4 also stated that he felt like he did not have time to make it to the gym because of the stress of the rest of his schedule. He indicated that he was not proud of himself lately because the reality of graduation and not knowing what was next in his future was providing him with a lot of stress, which was taking away time from thinking about maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Strategies for a Healthy Life

As none of the participants were first year students, they all had learned strategies that helped them to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Two of the six participants mentioned things that they had learned about themselves in the past and how they have used that to impact their lifestyle now. Participant 4 talked about how in the past he struggled with his mental health, and utilized the counseling center on campus. More recently he said,

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So I have not been to the counseling center since last year, but definitely venting to people more, like actually going around talking to people about stuff instead of [keeping everything in], because it is a huge thing with men to try and keep everything in, so people do not see our weak spots.

Participant 4 also talked about how he was not proud of himself lately because his health has not been his focus, but he has been using coping mechanisms he learned in the past to help him feel more balanced in terms of overall health.

Participant 6 also learned from the past and her busy schedule, and has made adjustments to make sure she stays active. Specifically, she talked about, for a while, her and her friend were getting up early to go for a walk, to fit the physical aspect of health into her day. With her schedule she knew that she would have to make adjustments to feel like she was living up to her own expectations of herself in terms of physical health.

Participant 3 talked about how she has learned that her schedule tends to be busy so she had to start thinking of ways to schedule her day in order to fit in time to maintain her health. In regards to her schedule, Participant 3 said:

Now I just started doing my homework in advance so that I have more time for myself throughout the week. So I am kind of working days ahead, so then, just like an hour between classes I have time for myself, so I have time to readjust to whatever I need to do.

This allows Participant 3 to have time to refocus, and get some alone time in, which she felt was important to her and her mental health.

For Participant 6, sleep was something she always made time for in her schedule, since it was the one of the important parts of her definition. She specifically talked about

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how she found a way to get herself to fall asleep faster. With her job she has an inconsistent sleep schedule so falling asleep faster was important for her. She stated, “I found that if I turn my fan on, if I turn off my TV and turn my fan on, I go to sleep with no problem.” Participant 6 also talked about how another trick for her is to be actively thinking about her health to help herself be more likely to do things about her diet, sleep or physical exercise.

Summary

There were several themes that emerged from the discussions with the participants. Themes such as the transition from high school to college, the importance of support networks and getting involved, all impacted the participants’ definition of a healthy lifestyle, and how they live out those definitions. Overall, participants have realized that while they may not live up to all the aspects they originally identified in their definition of a healthy lifestyle, participants were aware of the different aspects of health and their own expectations for each part of their individual definition. Each participant seemed to have a unique focus in their definition, and that aspect of health is the most important element of living a healthy lifestyle for them. Participants clearly understood that there is more to a healthy lifestyle than just physical exercise, they recognized that mental and emotional health are connected to overall health and well-being. Chapter V will conclude by providing a summary of the research findings and their impact on Student Affairs practice. The chapter will also include recommendations for Student Affairs practice, specifically concerning students’ health and well-being, and suggestions for future research on college student health.

Chapter V

Discussion, Recommendations, Conclusions

This research used semi-structured, qualitative interviews to understand college students' definition of a healthy lifestyle and what influences that definition. The purpose of the study was to learn what college students perceived a healthy lifestyle to be and compare that to how they actually live. Six participants with various backgrounds, majors, and involvements were interviewed and asked questions centered around the following research questions: (1) How does one define "healthy living"?; (2) What are students motivations for living a healthy lifestyle?; (3) How do students define well-being and does that include mental and emotional health along with physical health?; (4) How do social support networks impact healthy living?; (5) What are students doing to live up to or not live up to their definition of "health living" and overall well-being? This chapter will share the results of this study as they relate to previous research, recommendations for future research and recommendations for student affairs professionals.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how college students define healthy living as compared to how they actually live. Through the interviews with participants, it was demonstrated how differently college students define healthy living, and how unique those definitions were. The interviews also revealed specific areas where students lack knowledge on health and well-being. While there were areas that students lacked knowledge, there were also multiple themes that emerged from the six interviews which connected with previous research.

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A few of the themes from the current research were roles that physical, mental and emotional health play, and how the transition to college impacts students. For physical health, exercise tended to be the first aspect of health that students mentioned and the aspect they had the most knowledge of. When asked, they also had an idea of how much physical health they should be looking to get on a daily and weekly basis. For mental and emotional health, this was an aspect that was only mentioned by a few participants in their initial response, but all of them agreed it was a major part of a comprehensive definition of health during the course of the interview. This is one of the aspects of health that students knew the least about even while acknowledging that mental health can affect everything they do on a daily basis. Finally, the theme of the difficulties students encountered during the transition to college emerged from the interviews, and was connected to many of the research questions. Participants mentioned, in many ways, how their schedules and external influences changed once they moved to college. This is an aspect of a healthy lifestyle that college students and Student Affairs professionals need to be aware of its importance in order to better support and educate students.

Physical Health

In the interviews with the participants, all but one participant mentioned some form of physical health in their definition of a healthy lifestyle. Even though five of the six mentioned getting enough exercise, none of them accurately mentioned the recommended amount of physical activity which is identified as 30 minutes of moderate activity five times a week, or 20 minutes of vigorous activity, three times a week (ACSM/AHA, para. 2, n.d.). Although the participants varied in their estimation of the

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amount of physical activity that they should get each week, it was the most commonly mentioned aspect of health in the participants' personal definitions.

Physical health has been on the decline in colleges students in recent years, even though being physically active has been linked to many health benefits in college students (Eysenbach, 2015). These health benefits were seen by the participants even though they may not be participating in physical activity as regularly as they believed they should. Participant 5 was one of those participants that did not work out as much as he would have hoped, "I really try to get over [to the REC] to work out, because I usually feel better when I go over and work out twice a week." He was not the only participant that realized that they need to, and want to, exercise more often because it makes them feel better, but they have chosen not to go as much as they would like for a number of reasons.

Along with realizing that they may not be as physically active as they wish to be, multiple participants had a role model that encouraged and motivated them to stay physically active. These role models are people that the participants saw as people that let nothing stand in their way when it comes to being physically active. Seeing their role models achieve a level of physical activity that the participants wanted to achieve helped motivate them by showing them that it is possible to achieve their physical activity goals. Participant 5 said it best when he talked about his role model "he is a beast when it comes to ROTC stuff, I definitely feel like he is a power house, and if I can get to that I would be just like him". These role models have proven to be just one part of the change in a college student's social support networks as they transition away from home. Students are looking for these positive relationships, such as these physical health role models, to

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be the needed encouragement and support to maintain a healthy lifestyle. As seen in existing research, positive relationships have been shown to positively impact physical health because these relationships are a central component to students' lifestyle in college (Hale et al., 2005).

The shift in motivation and support networks is one of the many reasons for the decrease in physical activity in college, since students are now needing to find internal motivation to stay active and make time for physical activity (Barton & Hirsch, 2016). The change in social support networks and role models show us that giving students positive relationships in college could have a significant impact on successfully establishing healthy lifestyle habits. The participants had consistent external support from coaches, family, and friends at home, but realized that they also have to be internally motivated to stay physically active in college. Participants relied on external sources of motivation from others but, ultimately the shift to an internal source of motivation is important to note when looking at a students' individual definition of a healthy lifestyle. Students might already have some degree of internal motivation, but they are starting to realize in college, that the internal motivation assumes greater impact on them than before. This is especially apparent when their definition indicates more time being physically active than what they are actually doing.

Sleep was another aspect of physical health mentioned by several participants. While only a few participants specifically mentioned sleep being important, poor sleep has been linked to poor academic performance in college students (Ridner et al., 2016). Participant 2 said that sleep, for her, was the most important part of her healthy lifestyle. She recognized that college students do not usually get as much sleep as they should but

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it was a priority for her that she made time for in her schedule. She was the only participant to always make sure that she got enough sleep, whereas the other participants seemed to mention that sleep was the first thing to suffer when they had a busy schedule.

While participants realized that sleep was an important part of a healthy lifestyle, it was also not the first behavior they thought of to change regarding their lifestyle habits. Participants discussed the feeling of needing to stay up late to get everything done, referring to their class work, instead of making sure they get enough sleep. The purpose of sleep is to allow the body to refresh itself and not getting enough sleep can be harmful to your physical and mental health (Ridner et al., 2016). Knowing that college students recognize that sleep is important, but are not necessarily willing or able to make it a priority, can help college staff understand an important factor affecting college students' academic performance better because students are not giving their minds a chance to recharge and focus again. Not receiving enough or a consistent amount of sleep each week could result in a lower well-being in students, and it is already seen in college students that there is a decline in overall health (Ridner et al., 2016). It might also be a focus for education for college students as they transition from a set high school schedule to being able to set their own schedule in college. They need to know the benefits and impacts on their health if they are not getting enough sleep, and ways to make sleep a priority.

Mental and Emotional Health in College

Not only was physical health and exercise a large part of the participants' definitions, but when prompted, they all identified mental and emotional health as essential for overall health. Studies have shown that there are valuable connections

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between physical health and mental health, which can impact college students (Taliaferro et al, 2009; Doerksen et al., 2014). These studies looked at the connections between vigorous or moderate activity and psychological health. The results of one study showed the positive impact of physical health in lowering things such as depressed mood, anxiety, and stress, which are all things that can impact college students (Doerksen et al., 2014).

The students in this study recognized that mental health was connected to both emotional health, and both of them to physical health. The benefits that physical health has on overall health, specifically on mental health, has been clearly demonstrated, especially in college students who are under large amounts of stress (Bhochhibhoya et al., 2014). The participants were able to articulate their understanding of these connections and even shared how interconnected these aspects of a healthy lifestyle are. They understood that when they were mentally unbalanced, they were less motivated to be physically active and when they pushed themselves to exercise, it often helped them regain mental balance.

Another theme that arose during the study was how the overall feelings of happiness felt by the participants affected their focus on their health. Being in a positive mood or emotional state made them more willing to interact and engage with others, along with making the participants more willing to practice healthy lifestyle habits because they felt good about themselves. The students were able to identify how their own happiness directly impacted their interactions with their peer groups and they were able to identify the impact their emotional state has on their mental state and consequently their overall health. Recognizing that fluctuations in emotions effect one's

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overall health, especially when looking at personal motivation to stay healthy is important to understand when working with college students.

When evaluating the importance of living a healthy lifestyle, it is valuable to understand how mental and emotional health impacts students' performance both in and out of the classroom. While not all participants directly addressed mental health when they shared their personal definition, they all eventually acknowledged its importance in their lives. Knowing this, professionals can better understand that college students do not always think about the importance of their mental health even though they have been taught that it is important. Once they are reminded of its importance however, they are easily able to see the connections between mental, emotional, and physical health, and how it impacts their performance, even if it is not always at the forefront of their mind.

Transition to College

College often is the first-time students are away from home and having to make decisions for themselves. These decisions include those that center around living a healthy lifestyle, such as adjusting to a new academic schedule, being the sole person in charge of their free time, and developing a new routine with their health behaviors. Transition to college has been seen to be one of the most critical stages for developing healthy or unhealthy physical activity behaviors (Van Dyck et al., 2014). Students are not able to look to others to tell them what to do, because in college they are independent individuals responsible for their own decision making. They may have role models that they look to for support and guidance, but ultimately each individual student needs to find the internal motivation to maintain a healthy lifestyle. This internal motivation is different from high school where many students are used to being in organized sports

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where there was someone telling them what to do and helping them stay physically active (Van Dyck et al., 2014).

The participants clearly articulated the stress and difficulties that resulted from the transition between high school and college. A commonly discussed aspect and part of the structure in high school was the role of the organized sports in which they participated. Specifically, participants talked about being involved in organizations, sports, school, that forced them to stay physically active. In college, there is no external motivator, to get them physically active and to schedule their free time like there was when they were in high school. College students need to learn how to be internally motivated and consciously put time in their schedule to be active. Existing research shows that there was a small decrease in self-determination reasons for motivation and instead an increase in avoidance of guilt as motivation in college students, which shows that they have moved to being motivated by their own guilt to maintain healthy habits (Ulrich-French et al., 2013). While college students can have role models to look to for motivation, they ultimately need to focus on finding their own motivation to stay active and live a healthy lifestyle. This motivation may start as avoidance of guilt, since many participants talked about how they feel guilty if they do not practice healthy behaviors, but over time hopefully that will shift to a healthier internal motivation. Students are used to having someone else provide them with motivations and as they attend college they need to find something that motivates them personally in order to begin developing their own internal motivations. As they transition to college, they are not losing the external motivation from their support networks, instead students are shifting the motivation to be more focused on internal reasons than external.

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The change in motivation for living a healthy lifestyle also related to the shift in social support networks. In high school, these networks tended to revolve around groups and activities that kept students active while in college, the networks shift to various peer groups. College students use these networks to help prioritize their schedules and specifically what they choose to do in their free time. Participant 2 specifically highlighted the difference in her schedule in high school as compared to college, “When I was in high school everything was set, so I would have breakfast at 6 then go to school and have lunch and go to classes and dinner was at 8 every night”. Students become responsible for the motivation to live a healthy lifestyle, instead of relying upon an external force, such as parents, to manage their decisions.

While families can provide students with a support system while they live at home, college is a time for growth and change and can provide opportunities for students to individualize themselves from their families (Bland et al., 2012). College is seen as a place where students get to find themselves and start to figure out who they are and what they want to do with their lives. Part of finding themselves is getting involved in new things that they may not have been involved in while living at home. There may be new opportunities that they never considered or were not exposed to in high school, but in college spark their curiosity. These new involvements create ways for students to meet new people and build a new support system that is different than their support system from prior to coming to college, which living on their own. The participants discussed their social support networks in college and they talked about the various social groups they were involved with and how they impacted their overall health. Finding a sense of

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inclusion not only gives students a place where they feel they belong, but it provides a supportive peer group which positively impacts mental health.

Overall, all of the participants were involved in a variety of different activities in college compared to high school. The involvements in college provided them a less formal structure, in terms of being physically active, which tended to be the focus of involvements in high school. While these involvements no longer forced participants to stay physically active, they instead provided new social support networks which is equally important for students as they transition to college. It is important to note that the transition from high school to college often results in a higher risk for the decrease in physical activity because of the extra stressors college puts on students (Levy & Cardinal, 2006). Students are trying to balance the demands of classes along with trying to find a place that they feel included and accepted in college. These social support networks provide students support, a sense of belonging, and an outlet that parents previously provided for students while they were in high school. High school also provided students a structure for their day, while in college students must choose how they want to spend their time and what they want to be involved with outside of the classroom.

From this we can see that it is important to get students connected to various groups on campus so they can establish the necessary support as they make the transition to their new-found freedom away from home. This relates back to existing research which was conducted to see whether or not various domains in social support, such as tangible support, belonging, disclosure and social intimacy, can affect physical and mental health (Hale et al., 2005). Results of the study showed that the sense of belonging was the only domain for social support that had a direct impact on health, which is

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consistent with the research that was conducted in this study. Participants recognized that their involvements in high school had a positive impact on their health, and were looking to do the same in college. While students want the same impact from their involvements in college, many students do not join groups where the main focus is physical activity like it was in high school. Instead students tend to join groups in college that provide them with social support which has a positive impact on their overall health and well-being. Overall, getting students connected to new social support networks from the start of their college career will have a significant impact on overall health of students while they are in college. This needs to be a focus on professionals for incoming college students.

Connection to Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

As college students make the transition away from home, it is important to understand how their healthy lifestyle behaviors can change over time. One theory that can be seen in the current research and how college students transition is the Transtheoretical Model of behavior change. This theory explains behavior change over time, in stages that include changes in the cognitive and behavioral process and how that causes individuals to change their health behaviors (Levy & Cardinal, 2006). These stages include precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. The participants in this research can be seen in one of these stages as they were all working towards making healthier lifestyle choices. Some participants were further along than others when it came to actually making the change, but in the interviews with the participants, it was easy to see where they had made changes, and where they still had room to grow. These stages also connect back to the transition to college and how many

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changes occur when students move away from what they are used to. They have to actively make the changes to their health on their own, through internal motivation, instead of where they might have had someone else determining their choices for them. These stages of behavior change can also be influenced by the social support groups that they join in college and the role models that they look up to.

Along with the Transtheoretical Model of behavior change which describes how college students develop healthy lifestyle habits, it is also important to understand why students engage in certain behaviors, such as being active. The Self-determination theory was used in this research to explain the reasons why individuals decide to engage in a behavior, such as physical activity (Ullrich-French et al., 2013). With this theory, the main types of motivation that are considered are intrinsic motivation and external regulation. These motivations help to explain why a student is motivated internally or if they need an external motivation, such as a peer group, parents or teachers, to help them be motivated when it comes to physical activity (Ullrich-French et al., 2013).

All of the participants in the current research were seen to have both intrinsic motivation and external regulation encouraging them to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Participants were all involved in various groups on campus which tended to externally motivate them to choose healthy lifestyle habits. Being in these groups provided some participants role models that they could look to that showed them that living a healthy lifestyle in college is possible. While they had these role models and support groups through their involvements, they also realized that they had to find their own internal motivation to choose healthy behaviors. Students need to identify their own individual

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motivation and discipline, which is something many of the participants realized during their time in college.

Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals

Considering existing research, and the results of this study, there are several clear recommendations for student affairs professionals. Health is something that can affect all parts of a student's life as they adjust to living away from home and transition towards being responsible for themselves. Two aspects of the research stood out as having the most impact on students, and consequently areas that needs additional focus; the importance of involvement in college, and the support of all aspects of health from faculty and their support systems.

Importance of Involvement

Involvement was continually something that was brought up in each interview by the participants. Not only did each participant list everything they were involved in, many of them also mentioned people they have met through those involvements who have inspired them in living a healthy lifestyle. Involvement is something that is brought up to incoming college students and the importance of finding a connection to the university helps students make the transition away from home (Welle & Graf, 2011). What professionals may not see is the impact on health that these connections have on students. Previous research conducted about social support groups done by Hale et al. (2005) showed that belonging is the only variable that can directly predict health. Those results are similar to those found in this study where all of the participants were able to identify groups or individual people who they have met in college and have impacted their view and behaviors related to a healthy lifestyle.

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Knowing that support groups found through getting involved can have such an impact on college students' healthy lifestyle habits, a focus should be put on encouraging a healthy level of involvement in college. The groups that students join can give them opportunities to build the necessary balance as they look up to their peers, specifically those older than themselves. Older, successful students have figured out how to manage their time and energy in order to balance their activities to be successful and new students can be inspired by their example. With this recommendation, student affairs should focus on those students in leadership positions and teach them how to role model healthy behavior to newer students. Students who hold leadership positions, should not only be trained to be successful in their position, but also to be good role models of healthy lifestyle behaviors. Student leaders hold a significant weight for incoming students as peers that they will look up to, so it is also important that they know how to role model healthy behaviors. If these leaders are taught positive health behaviors, in all aspects of health, they then can also be a bigger impact on students, specifically first year students, who are transitioning to college and are learning how to choose healthy behaviors.

Support of All Aspects of Health

When participants were asked about mental and emotional health and whether they included that into overall health, all the participants agreed that all aspects of health are connected. In thinking of a healthy lifestyle, people tend to only think of physical health and not necessarily mental and emotional health. Participants described that when their mental health was low, or they did not feel good about themselves, their mood and mental headspace affected everything they did. In the study done by Doerksen, Elavsky, Rebar & Conroy (2014), it was seen that higher levels of physical activity can lower

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levels of psychological health, which was also what participants expressed. Knowing that previous research and the participants see the connection between mental and emotional health, student affairs professionals should also consider all aspects of health for college students. Seeing as none of the participants were first year college students, they have all learned how important mental health is for them. However interventions may be needed to educated incoming students, who may not recognize the connection of mental health to their overall health.

A recommendation for student affairs professionals would be to educate all students on the importance of supporting all aspects of health, not just physical health, specifically in first year students. This could be through programming, orientation classes, or through the orientation and new student process. A major part of this research was to see if college students acknowledge other aspects of health other than just physical health, and this also needs to be a focus for those who work on a college campus who support those students outside of the classroom.

Recommendation for Future Research

This study focused on college student's definition of a healthy lifestyle as compared to how they actually live. Six participants were interviewed to see how they define healthy living, what motivated them, whether or not they include mental and emotional health, and to find out if they believe they live up to their own expectation of a healthy lifestyle. The following are recommendations for future research revolving around the same topic of study:

- Conduct interviews with off campus students, since all participants in this study were those that live on campus. This can examine the impact distance to

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resources and access to professionals provided by a university, has on student's definitions and behavior regarding a healthy lifestyle. While off campus students may actually be physically closer to resources, depending on where you live on campus, on-campus students are constantly reminded of the resources available.

- Student athletes are a unique population who have a different lifestyle in many of the elements that these participants discussed. They share a structure that parallels the students' high school formal structure of meals and exercise. Are athletes less developed in understanding their own health because of the external locus of control that their coaches provide? Athletes were a group that was purposefully not interviewed because of their unique circumstances, but a study could show how their lifestyle compares to a non-athletes as well as how their schedule looks in their non-competing season.
- This research only looked at the experiences and ideas of six participants through qualitative interviews. A larger quantitative study using the same research questions, but obtaining answers from a larger sample could provide additional insights on the larger student population.
- The research was conducted at a mid-sized, Midwestern university. Results of the study could differ at a larger university or one outside of the Midwest region. This could also show how health is viewed differently in various regions.

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Conclusion

This study looked at how college students define healthy living as compared to how they actually live. Through six qualitative interviews with participants of varying backgrounds, participants each gave their unique definition of overall health and well-being. While they each focused on varying aspects of health, many themes emerged that were consistent with previous research. Results showed that physical health was one aspect of overall health that was mentioned the most by participants, therefore showing that college students are most educated on physical health as compared to other aspects of health. Even though college students are most educated on physical health, does not mean that they feel as though they live up to their own standards of physical health. This related back to how in high school, students' schedules were laid out for them, and now in college they are in control of their own schedules and how they spend their time.

In high school students have many external motivators, such as peers, parents and teachers, that motivate them to participate in healthy behaviors, and now they need to find the internal motivation to practice healthy behaviors while in college. With the shift in social support networks away from parents, college students need to find involvements that make them feel as though they belong, which motivates students to want to maintain healthy lifestyles. Participants recognized the impact that mental and emotional health have on their overall health, which is something student affairs professionals need to support by educating incoming students about. Finally, research showed that student affairs professionals need to work to educate students on the impacts of all aspects of a healthy lifestyle, as each aspect can have a major impact on student's success in college.

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Overall, this study looked at what student's perceived definition of healthy lifestyle is, in comparison to how they actually carry out that definition. It was found that physical health was the most mentioned aspect of health by participants, and the aspect they were most educated on. Mental and emotional health were commonly not initially mentioned in their definition, but all agreed that it directly affects their physical health which affects their overall health. It is important to note that social support networks change as a student moves to college, and they no longer have external forces dictating their schedules. Students must learn to switch their motivation to internal factors, but also realizing that their social support networks affect their health behaviors. Student affairs professionals need to be aware of all aspects of health as college students transition away from home, and find new ways to educate and support students health in the transition.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol Questions

1. How would you describe a healthy lifestyle to be?
2. What specific aspects of that definition are important to you?
3. What do you do on a weekly basis to live up to your definition?
4. What would you consider to be the recommended amount of exercise an individual should receive daily?
5. Who influences you and your definition of a healthy lifestyle?
6. How have your healthy lifestyle habits changed since coming to college?
7. How have your involvements you have joined on campus had an impact on your healthy lifestyle?
8. When you think of a healthy lifestyle would you consider mental and emotional health apart of that definition?
9. What do you do, besides physical activity and exercise, that impacts your overall health?
10. Do you think you live up to your own definition of a healthy lifestyle? Why or why not?

Appendix B

Informed Consent

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH*Student Perspective of Healthy Living in Campus*

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Andrea Coxey, a graduate student in the College Student Affairs program, and Dr. Jon Coleman, faculty sponsor at Eastern Illinois University.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study is designed to examine how college students define healthy living in college compared with how they actually live.

- **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

Participate in an interview with Andrea Coxey, graduate student in the College Student Affairs program. The interview will consist of questions related to your health habits while in college and what you believe to be the definition of healthy living and well-being.

Interviews will be videotaped so they can be transcribed and coded later. Only Andrea Coxey and Dr. Jon Coleman will have access to the recordings.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

At this time, there are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

Participants will learn what they perceive to be their definition of a healthy lifestyle and how they live up to or do not live up to that definition.

From this study Eastern Illinois University will learn what students' health habits are in college and how they can continue to help and educate students about healthy lifestyle habits.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of assigning a code name to each participant. The video recording and transcription will be kept in a locked drawer in Principal Investigator's apartment and is only accessible by Principal Investigator Andrea Coxey and sponsor Dr. Jon Coleman. The data will be destroyed after three years per IRB requirements.

HEALTHY LIVING IN COLLEGE

• PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled.

There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

• IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:
Andrea Coxey, Principal Investigator, (262)501-6035, acoxey@eiu.edu
Dr. Jon Coleman, Faculty Sponsor, (217)581-7240, jkcoleman@eiu.edu

• RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date